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Second report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2233 (2015)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 2233 (2015), the Security Council requested that I report every three months on progress made towards fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The present report covers key developments related to Iraq and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since the issuance of my report dated 26 October 2015 (S/2015/819).

II. Summary of key political developments pertaining to Iraq

A. Internal developments

2. During the reporting period, the Iraqi security forces, the Peshmerga, the popular mobilization forces and affiliates made significant territorial gains, notably through the recapture of Sinjar and the retaking of the seat of the provincial government in Ramadi.

3. During the reporting period, the Government of Iraq faced considerable political challenges in implementing its programme of reforms to counter corruption and address the ongoing economic and budgetary crisis. Intercommunal tensions and violent clashes in areas retaken from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) constituted another key challenge and highlighted the need for rapid progress in national reconciliation.

4. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, inter-party tensions, stemming in part from the political deadlock over the term and powers of the presidency, led to a reconfiguration of the Kurdistan Regional Government and affected the functioning of the Regional Parliament.

B. Political situation

5. During the reporting period, efforts to re-energize the national reconciliation process in Iraq focused on fostering a collective vision for reconciliation within the Sunni component and on establishing mutual understanding on what reconciliation entails.

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6. In an effort to consolidate the Sunni community's vision and representation in national reconciliation discussions, members of the Supreme Coordination Committee, established on 20 November, met Members of Parliament and Provincial Council members from six governorates, including Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din, on 9 December, under the auspices of the parliamentary Speaker, Salim al-Jubouri, and attended by the President, Fuad Masum, and my Special Representative. The Speaker laid out a nine-point preliminary plan to prepare for the post-ISIL period and reiterated the demand to address the status of Sunni detainees held without charge.

7. The three presidencies, comprising the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Parliament, continued to meet regularly to promote political inclusiveness and unity, and on 7 October created a higher presidential committee for national reconciliation to coordinate and advance national reconciliation efforts. The committee met on 30 December. The three presidencies also agreed to meet in January 2016 with the leaders of key political forces and blocs to define the way forward on national reconciliation. However, progress in expediting national reconciliation legislation remains stalled. The Council of Representatives concluded its second reading of the draft general amnesty law on 14 November, but ongoing disagreements have prevented its passage. Similarly, the drafts for the justice and accountability act, the banning of the Baath Party act and the national guard law remain stalled in Parliament.

8. Pro-reform protests continued into a sixth month, mainly in the southern governorates and Baghdad. However, participation has gradually dwindled amid a sense of frustration over the slow pace of reform and the lack of visible improvement in the delivery of services. On 29 October, the Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, met protest coordinators and assured them of his commitment to the reform agenda. On 26 December, protest coordinators from various governorates met in Maysan governorate and agreed to create a unified leadership and to continue the protests until popular demands for reform were met.

9. In mid-October, the Prime Minister initiated measures to reduce the salaries of civil servants in four ministries (Public Health, Higher Education, Oil and Electricity). Given the subsequent adverse political reaction and protests by civil servants, the Prime Minister instituted a governmental committee to review the measures. The 2016 federal budget included a provision for a cut of 3 per cent across the board in the salaries and allowances of all government officials and pensioners.

10. Some progress was also noted in the prosecution of officials accused of corruption. The Minister of Trade, Mallas Mohammed al-Kasnazani, who was subsequently dismissed by the Prime Minister, and other senior Ministry officials were indicted by the Integrity Court on corruption charges on 20 October. In Babil, on 16 November, the Criminal Court sentenced a Provincial Council member, Ollaiwi Farhan, to three years' imprisonment on corruption charges and further noted that the Integrity Commission had referred to the Court a corruption case against the former Governor, Mohammed al-Masoudi.

11. The Prime Minister's reform measures faced opposition from some national political partners. In late October, some Members of Parliament from the State of Law Coalition threatened to bring a no-confidence motion against the Prime Minister, since they felt that he had not consulted adequately on his reforms. On

2 November, the Council of Representatives voted unanimously to request the Prime Minister to refrain from implementing reforms in a manner that could infringe the separation of powers or the Constitution.

12. On 3 November, in a statement, the Prime Minister reiterated his commitment to continue reforms and fight corruption, in accordance with the will of the Iraqi people. He also issued a statement on 12 November reassuring Iraqi political partners of his openness to discussing the steps taken in pursuit of reform. On 24 November, the Federal Supreme Court dismissed on technical grounds an appeal by the former Vice-President, Osama al-Nujaifi, who challenged the constitutionality of the abolition of the vice-presidential positions as part of the reform efforts of the Government of Iraq.

13. Iraq continued to face daunting economic challenges, owing mainly to low global oil prices, the cost of the war against ISIL and the cost of addressing the needs of the growing number of internally displaced persons nationwide. On 16 December, the Council of Representatives approved the 2016 Federal Budget Law, the first time since 2006 that the proposed national budget was approved without delay. The national budget for 2016 presents an overall expected expenditure of $89.5 billion, a decrease of $13.1 billion from the budget for 2015. Iraq's expected oil revenue amounts to $59 billion. The deficit in the national budget is expected to reach $20.4 billion and will be financed through borrowing. Several provincial governments have complained that their allocations in the national budget are inadequate for their developmental needs. The President approved the 2016 Federal Budget Law on 3 January.

14. Baghdad and Erbil continue to disagree on the extent to which either side has complied with the terms of their December 2014 agreement on energy exports and revenue-sharing. Senior representatives of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and other Kurdish political parties visited Baghdad to discuss Baghdad-Erbil relations, including budgetary issues, with federal government officials, but a long-proposed formal high-level visit from Erbil to Baghdad has yet to take place.

15. On 12 October, protests lasting several days erupted in Sulaymaniyah over delays in the payment of civil servants' salaries, linked in part to the inconclusive talks between Kurdish parties on the issue of the Kurdistan Regional Presidency. The protests resulted in the deaths of five people, including members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and Gorran. The Kurdistan Democratic Party blamed Gorran for the unrest, expelled Gorran ministers from the Kurdistan Regional Government and barred the Gorran-affiliated Speaker of the Regional Parliament from returning to Erbil to resume his duties. The political stalemate continues over the Kurdistan Regional Presidency and related matters in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, and work at the Kurdistan Regional Government and Regional Parliament has been affected.

16. In addition to its internal political stalemate and disagreements with the federal Government, the Kurdistan region of Iraq has been simultaneously affected by the drop in oil prices and the continuing challenge of accommodating internally displaced persons from across the country. On 21 December, the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Regional Government unveiled a package of reforms that included a reduction of 50 per cent in the allowances of high-ranking officials and the suspension of all allowances to Members of Parliament of the Kurdistan region

of Iraq. On 28 December, the heads of the political blocs in Parliament, with the exception of Gorran, reconvened for the first time since 12 October to discuss the proposed package of reforms.

C. Security

17. The security situation in Iraq remained highly volatile during the reporting period. Military operations focused on recovering areas under ISIL control in Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates and on consolidating territorial gains made against ISIL with the support of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL and other partners.

18. Intercommunal tensions continued to threaten national reconciliation efforts on the ground in Iraq. On 12 November, clashes between the popular mobilization forces and the Peshmerga in Tuz Khurmatu, in Salah al-Din governorate, claimed the lives of 21 people. This led to further violence, during which an estimated 20 people were killed and 40 others were reportedly abducted from a checkpoint operated by the popular mobilization forces. Despite a ceasefire reached on 13 November, armed clashes recurred on 3 January. Since the liberation of Sinjar in late October, multiple clashes have led to a number of fatalities.

19. In Anbar governorate, the Iraqi security forces and tribal fighters, supported by the Global Coalition through air strikes, retook central parts of Ramadi, including the provincial governorate compound, and raised the national flag at the provincial police headquarters on 28 December. The Iraqi security forces are continuing their efforts to expel ISIL from the remaining areas of Ramadi while the retaken areas of the city are being secured by tribal fighters. In the first week of January, tribal fighters in the cities of Haditha and al-Baghdadi repulsed attacks by ISIL.

20. In Salah al-Din, the territorial gains made against ISIL were preserved, despite efforts by ISIL to regain momentum through diversionary attacks. Following the liberation of Baiji on 19 October, ISIL stepped up suicide attacks, indirect fire and complex attacks to the north-east of the city. The Iraqi security forces and the popular mobilization forces have repelled repeated attacks by ISIL in areas close to the western outskirts of Samarra. On 23 October, 69 hostages facing imminent risk of execution were freed in a joint raid by Peshmerga and special forces of the United States of America on an ISIL safe house in Hawija district, which resulted in the deaths of 20 militants and 1 United States soldier.

21. Baghdad continued to see the highest rate of attacks targeting civilians in the country. During the reporting period, Baghdad witnessed 374 incidents targeting civilians and 110 incidents targeting the Iraqi security forces. The deadliest attacks included suicide attacks at a Shiite mosque and a Shiite funeral in eastern Baghdad on 13 November, in which 43 civilians were reportedly killed and 90 injured. An earlier suicide attack on 8 November targeted a popular mobilization forces gathering in Sadr City, reportedly killing 20 of its members and wounding another 28. Unidentified bodies continued to be found on a daily basis in Baghdad city and outlying areas. Out of 130 recordings of unidentified bodies during the reporting period, 107 were in Baghdad.

D. Regional and international developments

22. During the reporting period, Iraq continued efforts to enhance its bilateral and multilateral relations and to secure political, military and economic support in its ongoing fight against ISIL.

23. High-level delegations from the Government of Iraq conducted bilateral visits to China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kuwait, Oman, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates to seek assistance in overcoming the ISIL threat and economic cooperation. On 15 December, further to the decision by Saudi Arabia to reopen its embassy in Baghdad and consulate in Erbil, a number of Saudi Arabian diplomatic personnel arrived in Iraq. On 21 December, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait announced that officials from both countries would soon finalize an agreement under which Iraq would supply Kuwait with gas. Following a visit by the Prime Minister of Iraq to China on 21 and 22 December, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China announced that bilateral relations would be elevated to establish a China-Iraq strategic partnership. On 29 December, the National Security Adviser, Falah al-Fayyad, visited the Russian Federation and presented a letter from the Prime Minister to the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, in order to strengthen bilateral ties and step up efforts to counter ISIL.

24. At the multilateral level, the President of Iraq attended the Fourth Summit of Arab and South American Countries, held in Riyadh on 10 November, and the summit of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum, held in Tehran on 22 November, with both resulting in pronouncements of support for Iraq. On 30 November, the President took part at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Paris. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, participated in the three meetings of the International Syria Support Group, held on 30 October, 14 November and 18 December, and in an extraordinary meeting of the Council of the League of Arab States, held on 24 December. At its annual ministerial meeting, held on 10 December in Riyadh, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf called upon the Government of Iraq and the Council of Representatives to address corruption, improve service delivery, enhance political inclusiveness and take concrete steps towards reform.

25. Iraq is continuing its military cooperation with the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, as well as with members of the quadrilateral intelligence-sharing mechanism, which includes representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic. On 4 November, at a small group meeting, the Global Coalition affirmed its continuing support to the Iraqi security forces and for the efforts of the Government of Iraq to address corruption, decentralize federal powers and reconcile ethnic and sectarian divisions in Iraq. On 29 October, Iraq announced the establishment of a joint intelligence-sharing centre, in collaboration with the European Union.

26. During the reporting period, the Government of Iraq issued multiple statements in which it stressed the need for its neighbours and international partners to uphold its sovereignty and territorial integrity. On 1 December, the Office of the Prime Minister issued a statement welcoming the support of the Government's international partners to Iraqi forces through the provision of arms, training and

advice, but indicated that the Government had no need for ground forces. On 3 December, the Prime Minister issued a statement reiterating his Government's rejection of foreign ground troops and warned that it would consider a ground fighting force an act of hostility.

27. The reporting period saw diplomatic tensions between the Governments of Iraq and Turkey regarding the presence of Turkish troops at a training camp in Bashiqa district, in the northern part of Ninewa governorate. The presence of the camp, which, according to the Turkish authorities, had been established in March 2015 to provide training to Iraqi volunteers, had never been acknowledged by the Government of Iraq.

28. In that regard, on 4 December, the Prime Minister of Iraq stated that Turkish troops had entered Iraqi territory on 3 December without the authorization of the Government of Iraq and that he considered it a breach of the sovereignty of Iraq. On 7 December, the Ambassador of Turkey to Iraq informed the Minister of Defence of Iraq, Khaled al-Obeidi, that Turkey had stopped the entry of troops into Iraq.

29. Bilateral efforts to de-escalate tensions included a visit to Baghdad on 10 December by two special envoys of the Prime Minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu, to meet the Prime Minister of Iraq, as well as telephone conversations between the two parties' Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence.

30. At a Security Council meeting held on 18 December at the request of the Government of Iraq, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq and the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations briefed the Council on their respective positions with regard to the Turkish military presence in Iraq.

31. On 19 December, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey stated its support for the sovereignty of Iraq and its readiness to coordinate efforts more closely to defeat ISIL. The statement indicated that Turkey considered the situation a miscommunication between it and the Government of Iraq regarding the deployment of "Turkish protection forces" and that Turkey was continuing to remove military forces from Ninewa. In a statement on 21 December, the Council of Ministers of Iraq welcomed the announced withdrawal by Turkey and expressed hope for a complete withdrawal.

32. On 24 December, in response to a request by Iraq, the Council of the League of Arab States held an extraordinary meeting at the ministerial level, in which it termed the Turkish deployment a violation of Iraqi sovereignty and a threat to Arab security. On 30 December, in a telephone conversation with the Prime Minister of Turkey, the Prime Minister of Iraq reiterated his call for the formal withdrawal of the Turkish troops from Iraqi territory.

33. On 16 December, 27 Qatari nationals were abducted in Muthanna governorate. On 18 December, the Prime Minister of Iraq informed the Prime Minister of Qatar, Sheikh Abdallah ben Nasser al-Thani, that the Iraqi authorities were working to secure their release. On 22 December, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf condemned the abduction as a breach of international law and called upon Baghdad to take immediate and decisive measures to ensure the safety and release of those abducted. On 27 December, the Iraqi security forces reported the arrest of four suspects in relation to the abduction.

III. Update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

34. During the reporting period, UNAMI continued to support the Government of Iraq in its efforts to promote inclusive national reconciliation among all Iraqi components and political groups, civil society and local communities. My Special Representative followed up with a wide range of interlocutors on priority legislation for national reconciliation and the Prime Minister's reform agenda, and underlined the need for openness, partnership, inclusiveness and broad consultations in decision-making to promote unity and effective governance. He also stressed the need to avoid political polarization over the reform programme.

35. My Special Representative undertook numerous visits to the Kurdistan region of Iraq to encourage all interlocutors in the region to break the ongoing political deadlock through inclusive political dialogue. In the course of his outreach activities in the governorates, my Special Representative visited Najaf on 1 November, Basra on 2 November and Kirkuk on 14 December, meeting religious leaders and Provincial Council representatives to discuss the prevailing political and security situation, efforts towards national reconciliation and reform, and other challenges facing the governorates.

36. On 15 December, UNAMI organized a workshop in Baghdad on the theme "Learning from precedent: the cost of failure and benefits of success in coming to terms with the past", in collaboration with the Reconciliation, Accountability and Justice Affairs Committee of the Council of Representatives and the Office of the Prime Minister. During the workshop, which was attended by 30 Members of Parliament, government officials and clerics, participants were encouraged to find common ground on the Justice and Accountability Act and the Banning of the Baath Party Act as a means to further reconciliation efforts. In an effort to encourage the role of civil society organizations in the national reconciliation process, UNAMI organized two workshops on 16 December in Baghdad to explore ways to improve cooperation between the Government of Iraq, the international community and civil society organizations in reconciliation and peacebuilding activities.

37. Amid a rise in incidents of intercommunal tensions in liberated areas, my Special Representative and interlocutors discussed measures to promote peaceful coexistence. Following the clashes in Tuz Khurmatu, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs met numerous interlocutors to de-escalate tensions and promote the protection of civilians.

38. My Special Representative and my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs also met representatives of minority communities to discuss concerns relating to the potential effects of the proposed national identity law on the minority ethnic and religious communities of Iraq. UNAMI and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Iraq called upon members of the Council of Representatives to address deficiencies in the legislation that could undermine the principles of pluralism and diversity in Iraq.

39. My Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, undertook a mission to Iraq from 1 to 7 November. In his meetings, the Special Adviser

condemned human rights violations — which may amount to genocide and crimes against humanity — in areas controlled by ISIL, and insisted that the fight against the terrorist group be conducted in full respect of human rights and international humanitarian law.

40. On 16 and 20 November, in Baghdad and Erbil, respectively, UNAMI and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) jointly organized conferences on the protection of diversity and the prevention of incitement to mark the International Day for Tolerance. The conferences brought together Iraqi religious leaders and faith-based organizations, among other stakeholders, who pledged to use their political and social standing to help to change attitudes and overcome stereotypes, and underlined the importance of legal provisions to celebrate diversity and protect minority components. The importance of revising education curricula and improving the training of teachers was also emphasized.

41. UNAMI continued its efforts to promote women's rights in Iraq in support of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Starting on 25 November, the United Nations led a series of events and activities in Iraq to mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign and highlight the plight of women as the group most affected by armed conflict. In Baghdad, on 25 and 26 November, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) held dialogues with representatives of women's groups to develop a plan of action to promote women as agents of change and transformative leaders for reconciliation and stabilization in their communities. The campaign culminated in Baghdad on 10 December with the commemoration of Human Rights Day, under the theme "Our Rights. Our Freedoms. Always.", held by UNAMI and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Iraq, in partnership with the Council of Representatives. The event launched a year-long campaign to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the two International Covenants on Human Rights: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

42. In a meeting held in Baghdad on 7 November, officials of the recently abolished State Ministry for Women's Affairs and representatives of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights, UNAMI and civil society organizations concluded that the abolition of the Ministry was a setback to the fulfilment of Iraq's international obligations to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, specifically in terms of implementing the national strategy on the advancement of women, the national strategy on the elimination of violence against women and the national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). Participants called for the creation of an independent entity, in cooperation with the Council of Representatives, to monitor the status of and promote women's rights through collaborative action with civil society organizations.

B. Electoral assistance

43. UNAMI continued to provide targeted and specialized electoral support to the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq and related institutions as they prepared for the 2017 Provincial Council elections. This included support to the

Commission's efforts to ensure the full participation of all Iraqi citizens, such as the establishment of a high-level committee on internally displaced persons and the development of special procedures for the registration of internally displaced persons. UNAMI continued to work with the Commission in making the process more inclusive. The Commission is continuing to collect the biometric data of voters as part of its preparations for the elections. As at 30 December, the biometric data of 3.94 million voters had been collected.

44. UNAMI continued to support the Government of Iraq in reviewing and consolidating its legal framework for elections. In that regard, UNAMI worked closely with a committee of representatives from the Council of Ministers, the Independent High Electoral Commission, shura councils and the Ministry of Justice to revise the law on provincial council elections (Law No. 36 of 2008, as amended). The review of the law is expected to be completed in early 2016.

45. Following the adoption of the Political Parties Law by the Council of Representatives in August 2015, the Independent High Electoral Commission decided to establish a political entities directorate, which will play a vital role in the Commission's interaction with political entities. UNAMI is working with the Commission to ensure that the new directorate is staffed with people of integrity and high professional competence.

46. UNAMI provided advice in discussions between the Independent High Electoral Commission and the Kurdistan Independent High Electoral Commission, which resulted in the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two institutions in October 2015 that clarified areas of cooperation, coordination and experience-sharing.

C. Human rights developments and activities

47. Armed conflict, acts of violence and terrorism continue to take a grave toll on civilians in Iraq. From 27 October to 31 December, UNAMI recorded a minimum of 2,944 civilian casualties (1,085 killed and 1,859 wounded), bringing the total number of civilian casualties in Iraq since the beginning of 2015 to at least 22,370 (7,515 killed and 14,855 wounded).

48. UNAMI received numerous reports alleging serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law perpetrated against civilians, in particular by ISIL. Members of diverse ethnic and religious communities, women, children, people with disabilities and the elderly remain especially vulnerable. I continue to have grave fears for the safety of up to 1,500 women and children, mostly from the Yazidi community, who are being held in captivity by ISIL, and all civilians who remain subject to ISIL control.

49. UNAMI continued to receive reports of abductions, killings and persecution by ISIL of those opposed to its ideology or rules. On 21 and 22 November, ISIL murdered 12 university students in Mosul. On 22 November, ISIL murdered two men in Fallujah for alleged homosexual acts by throwing them from a building. On 6 December, ISIL publicly killed a man in Mosul who was accused of practising magic. On 7 December, ISIL publicly murdered an imam in Mosul who had refused to praise the organization. On 9 December, ISIL murdered a female secondary school teacher in Mosul for purportedly refusing to teach the new curriculum issued

by the group. Individuals associated with the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi security forces were also targeted. On 25 and 30 November, respectively, ISIL publicly murdered a female former candidate to Parliament and a female former candidate to the Provincial Council in Mosul. On 29 November, in Mosul, ISIL killed three former police officers accused of cooperating with the Iraqi security forces.

50. Following the retaking of Sinjar, in Ninewa, by the Peshmerga on 13 November, at least 8 new mass grave sites containing victims murdered by ISIL were discovered, bringing the total number of such graves discovered to date to at least 16. Government officials informed UNAMI that they had neither the resources nor the expertise to adequately protect or excavate these sites, with the possible loss or damage of forensic evidence and means of identification of the remains. ISIL also continued to destroy sites of cultural and religious significance. On 6 November, ISIL used explosives to destroy a convent in Tal Kaif district, in Ninewa, and on 14 November it destroyed a Sunni mosque in Tal Afar district, also in Ninewa.

51. UNAMI continued to receive reports alleging that armed groups associated with government security forces had perpetrated human rights violations, often targeting members of the Sunni Arab community. For instance, since May 2015, UNAMI has received a number of reports that members of the Sunni Arab community were abducted by Shiite armed groups at Bzebiz Bridge and other locations in Anbar governorate, some of whom were reportedly freed after payment of ransom, while others were either killed or remain missing. Reports were also received of the extensive destruction of civilian properties in Baiji district, in Salah al-Din, subsequent to its recapture by the Iraqi security forces and the popular mobilization forces on 21 October. On 22 October, following a suicide car bomb attack in Tuz Khurmatu district, in Salah al-Din, Shiite armed groups abducted at least 175 Sunni Arab community members, some of whom remain in captivity. Internally displaced persons continue to face barriers to their return. On 1 November, Shiite armed groups, reportedly part of the popular mobilization forces, prevented up to 300 families from the Sunni Arab community from returning to several villages in Yathrib subdistrict, in Salah al-Din.

52. Other armed groups carried out attacks on members of the Shia community. On 30 November, a suicide bomb attack in Baghdad killed three and injured nine civilians, many of whom were marking the Shia religious observance of Arba'een.

53. The continuing pattern of targeted killings threatens to disturb social cohesion and heighten sectarian tensions in Iraq. In Kirkuk, on 1 December, the head of the Arab bloc in the Kirkuk Provincial Council and his wife were assassinated. Since May 2015, six other Arab community leaders have been killed in targeted attacks in Kirkuk by unidentified assailants. In Babil, on 3 January, explosions targeted three Sunni mosques and a Sunni cleric was assassinated, which coincided with the news of the execution of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. Before the recapture of Sinjar on 12 November, approximately 163 Sunni Arab families fled from villages north-east of Sinjar to Ayadiya subdistrict, in Tal Afar district, but were denied entry to territory controlled by the Peshmerga. The families remain stranded between Peshmerga and ISIL lines and their humanitarian situation is reported to be critical.

54. UNAMI received reports of possible reprisals by Yazidi armed groups in the aftermath of the recapture of Sinjar. On 14 November, a Yazidi armed group entered two Sunni Arab villages, N'eni'a and Golat, north-east of Sinjar, and looted and

destroyed property. On 15 November, another Yazidi armed group entered a Kurdish village, Qabousiya, and reportedly shot and injured the village chief and his brother.

55. Air strikes and shelling continued to cause civilian casualties. However, the exact number of and responsibility for the casualties remains uncertain, owing to difficulties in verifying information. There were reports of three incidents between 9 and 16 November, in which a total of 27 civilians were killed and many more were injured, in the areas of Qayyara, in Ninewa governorate, central Mosul, in Ninewa governorate, and Fallujah, in Anbar governorate. In addition, shelling killed two civilians and wounded four others in Fallujah on 21 November. Also in Fallujah, on 26 November, an air strike reportedly hit a residential building, killing 12 civilians, including 8 children, and wounding 6 children.

56. The Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, co-chaired by UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), received reports of 147 incidents of violations against children during the reporting period, including 38 instances of children killed and 67 of children maimed. This represents a significant increase from the previous reporting period. In one such incident, on 26 November, eight children were killed and six wounded during a military operation in al-Halabsa village, near the city of Fallujah. Most of the children were under 10 years of age. Since the beginning of 2015, a total of 190 children have been confirmed killed and another 303 wounded as a result of the conflict in Iraq. The Task Force received information on 38 incidents of attacks on schools during the reporting period, with the majority taking place in Anbar.

57. The Task Force has also documented several cases of recruitment of children by ISIL. Of 18 boys who were reported to have joined ISIL during 2015, 6 were allegedly killed in fighting. ISIL posted pictures and videos on social media of children executing prisoners.

58. UNAMI received reports of journalists being harassed or assaulted by unknown individuals. On 28 October, a journalist was abducted and killed in the city of Basra. As pro-reform protests continued in the southern governorates of Iraq, seven protestors and a police officer were wounded on 30 October in clashes in Diwaniya, in Qadissiya governorate.

59. During the reporting period, UNAMI supported training for government security personnel on their international obligations in the conduct of counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations and in civilian law enforcement. UNAMI also engaged organizations and representatives of Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious minority communities to develop a set of recommendations to enhance the Government's protection of minority components, respect for their rights and reintegration of internally displaced persons. UNAMI is also developing proposals for criminal law reform to address systemic weaknesses in the administration of justice in Iraq, promote respect for due process and fair trial standards and promote access to justice for all Iraqis.

60. UNAMI continued to provide support to Iraqi institutions and civil society during the reporting period. In follow-up to the universal periodic review of Iraq conducted by the Human Rights Council in March 2015, UNAMI held consultations on 23 November in Baghdad and on 14 December in Erbil with members of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights of Iraq, the Independent Board of

Human Rights of the Kurdistan region and civil society representatives to support the development of Iraq's second national action plan on human rights.

D. Camp New Iraq and Camp Hurriya

61. UNAMI continues to monitor the humanitarian situation of the residents of Camp Hurriya. On 29 October, the Camp was the subject of a rocket attack in which 24 residents were killed and 50 others were wounded. Following the attack, my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs met relevant interlocutors from the Government of Iraq, as well as representatives of the residents, and called upon the Government to abide by the 2011 memorandum of understanding and ensure adequate security for the Camp's residents, while conducting an independent and thorough investigation into the attack. He also encouraged the continuation of relocations to third countries as the only durable solution to ensure residents' safety.

62. The relocation of residents from Camp Hurriya was taken up with a renewed sense of urgency in 2015. In the wake of the 29 October attack on the Camp, my Special Adviser for the Relocation of Camp Hurriya Residents Outside of Iraq, in coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), mobilized efforts to arrange for 100 airline tickets to be bought by the United Nations trust fund for the relocation of Camp Hurriya residents outside Iraq in order to expedite the relocation process and meet the target of 480 relocations to Albania by the end of 2015. The targets were met successfully.

63. To date, a total of 1,118 residents have relocated outside Iraq, leaving 1,955 residents in Camp Hurriya. My Special Adviser, with the assistance of relevant stakeholders, including UNHCR, continues to seek an accelerated solution for the residents of Camp Hurriya. I am concerned that funding for the monitoring of camp activities by the United Nations and for relocation activities by UNHCR is set to expire in May 2016.

E. Humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development

64. The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate over the reporting period, and the conflict in Iraq has had profound humanitarian consequences. Nearly a third of Iraq's population, or 10 million people, require some form of humanitarian assistance, including 3.2 million people who have fled their homes since January 2014, around 470,000 returnees and nearly 250,000 Syrian refugees. Three million more people are living under ISIL control. Recent trends in insecurity, restrictions on movement and bureaucratic impediments in Anbar, Kirkuk and Ninewa governorates indicate that displaced persons are compelled to stay within the contested areas.

65. With conditions worsening, people are struggling to cope. At least 2 million people are entering their second year of displacement. Family savings are exhausted, increasing the demand for livelihood options, while incidents of social tension are increasing. There is an exponential deterioration in the condition of host communities, as families who have generously opened their homes to displaced relatives and neighbours are plunging rapidly into poverty. Leadership and financing by the Government of Iraq have been essential in addressing the situation. However, the massive public fiscal gap has led to a contracting social protection net and has

decreased service delivery by institutions in communities hosting displaced persons. The security situation in many areas remains fluid, triggering new displacement, with some people uprooted for the second or third time. Around 77 per cent of all displaced Iraqis (over 2.4 million) have fled Anbar and Ninewa governorates into other territories.

66. The cholera outbreak that was declared in Iraq on 15 September is on the wane. During the reporting period, 1,668 cases were confirmed, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to around 2,870 across 17 of Iraq's 18 governorates. The decrease in new cases is due to effective containment measures, efficient case management and declining temperatures. The Government of Iraq, with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, completed a cholera vaccination campaign for 232,000 refugees and internally displaced persons considered to be at high risk of contracting the illness (94 per cent of the target) in 62 camps in 13 governorates. However, poor water supply infrastructure and inadequate water coverage, particularly in rural areas, remains a key challenge. Colder weather during the reporting period brought additional hardship for displaced Iraqis. Around 400,000 people urgently need shelter assistance, and at least 780,000 people lack essential household and other life-sustaining items to mitigate the impact of the harsh winter weather. The humanitarian community started distribution of core relief items to displaced and refugee households, working also to support the efforts of the Iraqi authorities through the distribution of kerosene fuel supplies, cash assistance and shelter upgrades.

67. During the reporting period, more than 100 humanitarian partners responded across the country. Protection monitoring teams reached around 140,000 people, and 30,000 women and girls accessed women's shelters. Around 1.5 million displaced persons and 100,000 refugees were provided with food assistance by the World Food Programme (WFP) and food security partners. More than 2.8 million displaced persons were provided with continued access to safe water, while more than 498,000 displaced individuals were provided with access to permanent sanitation facilities. A total of 94,380 Syrian refugees in 10 camps benefited from continued access to water, sanitation and hygiene services. From the start of the new school year in September 2015, more than 79,000 newly enrolled displaced children benefited from improved access to education through new schools built in coordination with the Ministry of Education. UNICEF supported the construction of 45 schools across Iraq in 2015, with 152 extra classrooms to cater for the increase in students. At the start of the new academic year, 44,000 out of a total of 78,000 refugee children were receiving education. UNICEF and WFP, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Organization for Migration and nine non-governmental organizations, delivered combined life-saving assistance through the rapid response mechanism to around 30,000 recently displaced and vulnerable people. In December, WFP distributed food supplied by the Government to 70,000 people in the ISIL-besieged towns of Haditha and al-Baghdadi in Anbar. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations provided 500 tons of wheat seeds and fertilizers to 10,000 of the most vulnerable people in newly liberated areas to enable farmers to increase food availability and generate income.

68. With the support of WHO and health cluster partners, 299,382 Iraqis were provided with basic health-care services, including 8,597 people who received specialized referral services. UNFPA ensured the provision of reproductive health-

care equipment and supplies to 127 maternity units, general hospitals and primary health-care units. Health partners activated critical services in hard-to-reach areas in Salah al-Din and newly established camps in Kirkuk through 13 mobile units and teams. UNHCR also opened a camp in Kirkuk, providing shelter to 1,600 families.

69. The return of displaced families to areas liberated from ISIL occupation continues to be limited. The Mine Action Service conducted threat assessments and surveys of areas contaminated by explosive hazards in 10 priority locations, including retaken areas, to enable the safe and voluntary return of displaced persons, and established coordination mechanisms to reinforce national capacities for assessing and mitigating explosive threats in southern and central Iraq and in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

70. During the reporting period, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization and with the support of 14 international donors, continued to support efforts by the Government of Iraq to stabilize newly liberated areas by restoring the delivery of basic services, jump-starting the local economy and promoting community reconciliation. Several projects in Tikrit district have been completed, directly benefiting 65,000 people with potable water from three rehabilitated pumping stations and treatment plants; 30,000 people with ambulance services and rebuilt primary health-care centres; 20,000 people with electricity from new mobile grids; thousands of children with rehabilitated schools; thousands of people with a refurbished police station; and hundreds of young people paid to remove rubble and waste, upgrade public facilities, paint public buildings and walls and clean Tikrit University. UNDP has expanded its support to other districts in Salah al-Din, Ninewa, Diyala and Sinjar governorates; in Anbar, it is supporting the Government of Iraq in the imminent reconstruction of Ramadi through the preparation of a comprehensive stabilization strategy. In its concern about the deferred maintenance of the Mosul Dam, the United Nations is working with the Government of Iraq and other interested parties to accelerate arrangements for needed repairs.

71. In support of the mandate of UNAMI to advance national reconciliation, reforms and human rights, UNDP provided technical advice for the development of a community reconciliation strategic framework that proposes programmatic elements for community and national reconciliation in Iraq. UNDP also assisted the Government of Iraq in finalizing its national security strategy, which centralizes the concept of human security, promotes inclusivity and equality and will support the Government's efforts in developing a security sector reform plan. The United Nations Office for Project Services supported the creation and furnishing of a training and documentation centre for the Independent High Commission for Human Rights of Iraq, facilitated the development of a database and document management system and provided the necessary training to staff. UNICEF supported the finalization of the national child protection policy in December 2015, which aims to address gaps in existing legislation, service delivery and child protection issues that affect marginalized and disadvantaged children.

72. As part of efforts to build capacity for the sustainable development of Iraq, the International Organization for Migration delivered training on community policing, benefiting 20 communities, and also trained 42 government officials and members of civil society on the issues of migration, trafficking and humanitarian border management. UNFPA delivered training on reproductive health-care services to

staff, covering 91 beneficiaries, and on statistics management to 31 central and Kurdistan statistics offices. UNESCO trained Ministry of Education staff on their roles, responsibilities and duties to begin the establishment of the Iraqi national curricula centre. To strengthen immunization services on a long-term basis, WHO provided technical support to transition from trivalent to bivalent oral polio vaccines.

73. In the wake of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Paris, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched three programmes in Baghdad on 24 December: a national programme to combat sand and dust storms; a national programme of action to combat desertification; and the first national communication report on climate change. UNEP continued to assist the Government of Iraq in developing a management plan to integrate the cultural and natural components of the Iraqi marshlands in support of their nomination as a World Heritage Site. UNESCO continued to provide technical and managerial capacity in integrated groundwater resources management to safeguard essential access to potable water.

F. Security and operational issues

74. In follow-up to the strategic assessment mission conducted in April 2015, UNAMI stepped up its efforts to enhance the strategic coherence of the work of the United Nations in Iraq. My Special Representative established an inter-agency team to conceptualize an integrated strategic framework for the United Nations in Iraq in 2016.

75. The continued absence of a status of mission agreement between Iraq and the United Nations continues to hamper the effectiveness of United Nations operations. United Nations personnel continue to work and conduct missions in Iraq under challenging circumstances in a volatile security environment. The United Nations security management system continues to implement significant risk mitigation measures, in coordination and cooperation with relevant Iraqi government security agencies in support of United Nations activities. A locally recruited UNHCR staff member who had been abducted on 26 September was released on 3 October as a result of the efforts of the Iraqi security forces. Regrettably, no progress has been made with regard to the UNAMI staff member abducted on 26 April in Diyala governorate.

76. The limited availability of secure accommodation in Baghdad for United Nations international staff continues. Of the additional 99 approved units, 10 are likely to be completed by February and by August 2016, and the remaining 79 by the end of February 2017. UNAMI also continues to provide logistical and administrative support to the United Nations country team to conduct its programmes and operations countrywide on a cost-reimbursable basis.

IV. Observations

77. I welcome the efforts of the Government of Iraq to address the myriad challenges facing Iraq. Commendable resolve has been demonstrated by the

Government and people of Iraq in the fight against ISIL, whose radical and sectarian ideology continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. I congratulate the Iraqi security forces for demonstrating through their victories over ISIL in Sinjar and in central parts of Ramadi that terrorism can be defeated through coordinated efforts and unity of purpose in the pursuit of shared goals and objectives.

78. I thank all members of the international community for complementing this effort. I reiterate the importance that all Member States and partners supporting Iraq in the fight against ISIL do so in a manner that is in line with the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitution of Iraq and respect the country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity at all times. I urge Turkey and Iraq to reach a sustainable resolution to the issue of the Turkish military presence in Bashiqa camp in Iraq through bilateral dialogue.

79. The Government of Iraq, in response to the expressed will of the Iraqi people, has pursued reforms to fight corruption and to strengthen public sector efficiency and accountability. I urge that these efforts be accelerated on the basis of collaboration, compromise and consultation between the branches of government, in particular between the executive and the legislature. I urge all political actors in Iraq to support the Prime Minister's reform agenda by placing national interest above all other considerations.

80. Reform measures must be implemented in a way that is meaningful to the public and be complemented by efforts to improve public service delivery and diversify the economy. This would not only create conditions for good governance, but would also stimulate economic growth and job creation. The people of Iraq continue to make their voices heard peacefully in weekly protests, and there must be a response to these calls.

81. Tangible steps to promote reconciliation should include amendments to or the adoption of legislation, such as the justice and accountability law, the national guard law and the general amnesty law, all of which await passage. Legal provisions must be put in place to prohibit hate speech, protect minority components and create a culture of peaceful coexistence and mutual acceptance. In this regard, I am concerned about the potential impact of the proposed national identity law on the protection and promotion of pluralism and diversity in Iraq.

82. I welcome the steps taken by the three presidencies to enhance the national reconciliation agenda, and I encourage them to accelerate implementation of the agenda. Intercommunal clashes during the reporting period in Salah al-Din and Ninewa, in areas recently freed from ISIL, highlight the need for careful operational planning and urgent progress in intercommunal reconciliation in those areas.

83. I condemn in the strongest possible terms the continuous killing, kidnapping, rape and torture of Iraqis by ISIL. I strongly condemn the suicide attacks that indiscriminately kill and maim civilians and children on a regular basis, and I urge the Government of Iraq to do all it can to bring those responsible to justice.

84. I urge the Government of Iraq to implement clear action plans, policies and legislation that promote women's empowerment, including the national action plan on women, peace and security. Gender-based violence regrettably continues to occur frequently and is also having a major impact on girls' access to education.

85. Conflict, violence and displacement have adversely affected children's education in Iraq; almost 2 million Iraqi children are currently out of school. As displacement increases, children are more exposed to grave violations, miss out on foundational years of schooling and feel increasingly desperate and disempowered. The protection of children and investment in their future needs to be a priority to achieve peace and security in Iraq.

86. I remind all parties engaged in the fight against ISIL that military operations must be conducted with the utmost care to avoid civilian casualties and in full respect of fundamental human rights principles and humanitarian law. Regrettably, in areas retaken from ISIL, there have been reports of arbitrary arrests, killings, destruction of property, efforts to forcibly change demographic composition and retaliatory violence. To address these violations and ensure that internally displaced persons can return safely to their places of origin, the Government of Iraq must ensure that State authority and the rule of law are restored as quickly as possible to the areas concerned. I also strongly urge the Government of Iraq to make every effort to secure the release of the UNAMI staff member abducted on 26 April.

87. I encourage the Government of Iraq to ensure that funding is available to support the prospective reconstruction efforts of the areas previously held by ISIL. UNDP will be leading efforts based on the principles of the new resilience agenda for the Middle East to help people in Iraq to cope with the crisis, recover and become strong enough to deal with future exigencies. I would like to thank Germany, Italy, Norway and Sweden for their recent generous donations in support of stabilization efforts.

88. I condemn the heinous attack on Camp Hurriya on 29 October. I call upon the Government of Iraq to bring the perpetrators to justice, and I reiterate the Government's responsibility to ensure the safety and security of the Camp's residents. I note that more than 1,000 residents have been relocated outside Iraq under the auspices of the United Nations since the signing of the memorandum of understanding in 2011, and I call upon the Government and international stakeholders to work closely with my Special Adviser for the Relocation of Camp Hurriya Residents Outside of Iraq to accelerate the relocation of the residents.

89. Humanitarian response efforts in Iraq remain underfunded. The $498 million appeal to address the humanitarian situation during the second half of 2015 generated less than 50 per cent of the target, forcing humanitarian partners to close life-saving programmes. In recognition of the enormous security, operational, capacity and funding constraints they are facing, humanitarian partners are requesting $861 million for the 2016 humanitarian response plan to help to ensure that the most vulnerable people receive the assistance they need. I urge that this appeal, which reflects the absolute minimum required to help Iraqis to survive the crisis, be adequately resourced as soon as possible to meet growing needs and prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, given its impact on the security of Iraq, the region and beyond and the continued high levels of migration.

90. Lastly, I wish to extend my appreciation to my Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, and the staff of the United Nations in Iraq for their continued efforts in assisting the Government and people of Iraq. I trust that international partners, including Iraq's neighbours, will continue to support my Special Representative in the implementation of his mandate.